

Message Text

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73

ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-11 INR-10 LAB-06

NSAE-00 RSC-01 SIL-01 HEW-08 PA-04 PRS-01 USIA-15

MED-03 SCI-06 AID-20 DRC-01 /108 W

----- 070227

R 231430Z MAR 74

FM AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3719

INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

:AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA 386

AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

USCINCSO

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USCINCSO FOR POLAD

E. O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELAB, NU

SUBJECT: HOSPITAL STRIKE CONTINUES

REF: MANAGUA 0995

1. THE STRIKE OF DOCTORS, NURSES AND AUXILIARIES IN NICARAGUA'S MAJOR PUBLIC HOSPITALS ENTERS ITS THIRD WEEK WITH THE WORKERS AND GOVERNMENT DEADLOCKED OVER THE ISSUE OF WAGE INCREASES. NEGOTIATIONS BROKEN OFF MARCH 14 HAVE NOT BEEN RESUMED ALTHOUGH THE OPPOSING PARTIES HAVE COMMUNICATED INFORMALLY THROUGH INTERMEDIARIES.

2. THE STRIKE HAS NOT SPREAD TO MEDICAL PERSONNEL IN THE SOCIAL SECURITY AND MINISTRY OF HEALTH CLINICS OR TO THE REGULAR STAFF PHYSICIANS OF THE HOSPITALS. WHILE ALMOST ALL OF THE HOSPITAL RESIDENTS AND INTERNS ARE OUT, APPROXIMATELY HALF OF THE NURSES AND AUXILIARIES REMAIN ON THE JOB. THE GOVERNMENT HAS MOBILIZED

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MEDICAL MANPOWER FROM OTHER AREAS AND UNTRAINED VOLUNTEERS TO FILL

THE GAP, ESPECIALLY AT MANAGUA'S VELEZ PAIZ HOSPITAL, AND IS SATISFIED THAT IT CAN HOLD OUT. HOWEVER, HAVING EXHAUSTED MOST OF ITS RESERVES, THE GOVERNMENT COULD PROBABLY NOT COPE IF THE STRIKE WERE TO SPREAD. MOREOVER, A GROUP OF PROMINENT STAFF PHYSICIANS AT VELEZ PAIZ ISSUED A STATEMENT MARCH 20 WARNING THAT THE STOPGAP USE OF UNTRAINED PERSONNEL WAS EXTREMELY DANGEROUS AND SHOULD NOT BE CONTINUED. THE GOVERNMENT NEVERTHELESS BELIEVES THAT THE STRIKERS ARE WEAKENING AND TIME IS ON ITS SIDE. IT IS THEREFORE LETTING THEM SWEAT IT OUT, EXPECTING THAT THEY WILL ACCEPT THE GOVERNMENT OFFER AND WILL RETURN TO WORK.

3. ON MARCH 18 GENERAL SOMOZA INTERVENED PERSONALLY WITH A TOUGH PUBLIC STATEMENT BLAMING THE STRIKE ON POLITICAL "AGITATORS" AND DEMANDING THAT THE WORKERS RESPECT THE LAW AND RULES OF THE GAME AND HONOR THEIR PROFESSIONAL OBLIGATIONS BY RETURNING TO WORK IMMEDIATELY.

HE WARNED THE WORKERS THAT THEY WERE NOT "INDISPENSABLE" AND PROCEEDED TO ORDER THE FIRING OF THE HEAD OF THE SCHOOL OF NURSING FOR ISSUING A STATEMENT SUPPORTING THE STRIKE. THE NURSING SCHOOL DIRECTOR RESPONDED NOTING THAT SHE MADE THE STRIKE SUPPORT STATEMENT AS PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL NURSES ORGANIZATION NOT AS HEAD OF THE SCHOOL, AND, CHALLENGING GENERAL SOMOZA'S AUTHORITY TO REMOVE HER, SHE ADVISED HIM TO MIND HIS OWN BUSINESS. THE SOMOZA-OWNED NOVEDADES REPLIED TO THIS CHARGE WITH A LETTER FROM A SOMOZA-SUPPORTING NURSE MAINTAINING THAT THE LAW ESTABLISHING THE NATIONAL EMERGENCY COMMITTEE GAVE THE GENERAL AUTHORITY TO INTERVENE AND FIRE WORKERS.

4. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH THE WORKERS DO NOT APPEAR READY TO CAPITULATE COMPLETELY, WE BELIEVE THEIR POSITION HAS WEAKENED IN RECENT DAYS. IF THE GOVERNMENT IS PREPARED TO GIVE SLIGHTLY MORE THAN ITS ORIGINAL OFFER, IT SHOULD BE ABLE TO SUCCESSFULLY NEGOTIATE A SETTLEMENT. WE EXPECT NEGOTIATIONS TO RESUME NEXT WEEK.
SHELTON

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